

CHAPTER V

INSTINCTS (*continued*)

WE now pass to four classes of instinctive impulses which from a rigidly material point of view appear to be superfluous and can hardly have been of practical usefulness in the physical evolution of man.

CRUELTY.—Not only do living creatures eat other creatures: in many cases they seem to take a fiendish pleasure in inflicting torture and in watching the agonies of their victims. We know too little of the psychology of the lower animals to accuse them with certainty. But a cat playing with a mouse is a familiar illustration of this instinct. It apparently attains its strongest in man. Boys naturally delight in mutilating insects and teasing animals: savage tribes torture their captives: cruelty, as well as courage, actuates the soldier in the heat of conflict, and suggests the shameful mutilations which semi-civilized races can perpetrate upon the slain and wounded. Crowds of delicate women are fascinated by the disembowelling of horses at a Spanish bull fight, just as their sisters centuries ago, critically gazed upon the agonies of gladiators and Christian martyrs. It is difficult to believe that it is only ten generations since Englishmen—the dons and undergraduates of Oxford—stood round while venerable bishops were burnt in the streets. At